

“GUTTING FISH” - Ian - M - 40s/60s

EXT. “BARRACUDA” ON THE LAKE - DAY

Ever since marrying Rebecca, Ian has been connecting with his stepson Zack on a series of fishing trips. Little is said out on Ian’s boat, the “Barracuda”, but the zen-like activity has started to bond the two—who grow more and more comfortable in each other’s company. Today, however, Zack has learned that his father has remarried without telling him. Ian has tried everything to get the boy to open up and speak his feelings.

Ian: ...yeah. Fathers are complicated. You don’t think it looking at them, doesn’t feel like they should be. They hide their ... their, um- their “clockwork”, I wanna say. As if they don’t want to trouble you with any more about themselves than they absolutely have to. *(Pause.)* Doesn’t sound very healthy, does it? Suppose that’s a product of a time. Dads are always dinosaurs like that.

You never got to meet my father. He had his “clockwork”, but he was a good man—and long before a father needed to be. He loved us; he told us he loved us. Took us on fishing trips and he’d tie our hooks and sinkers, cast our lines until we were old enough to do it ourselves. The one thing he’d never let us do is gut the fish. That was the one thing he kept for himself, even after we’d all grown up.

Wasn’t until he was gone that I realised he’d never taught me how to do it. I knew the mechanics of gutting fish: I’d watched him do it a thousand times. But I didn’t have the knack of it like he did, the comfort in the doing, I suppose. Even now, even out here on trips with you, I still feel like I’m standing in his boots when I’m gutting fish. Like maybe he’s going to step in next to me and take the knife and ... take over.

As I said. Complicated.